

National Catholic Theater Conference

PRODUCTION CALENDAR

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THE AMERICAN THEATRE has formed its own war relief organization and called it The American Theatre Wing War Service. The Wing will maintain workrooms, establish canteens, care for the families of theatre people who are in the services, assist work in the hospitals, help the Red Cross, the U.S.O., assist theatre people in finding the most useful forms of service, and develop new services as the war effort goes forward.

All theatrical groups, professional and non-professional, who contribute automatically become members of The American Theatre Wing. Should you decide to join this nation-wide drive, a special committee of The Wing is ready to assist you in any way it can. If you wish to give a benefit performance of a modern play, it will get in touch with the author through proper authorities, and ascertain whether he will waive royalties for this occasion. The (see page 4)

A letter to The New York Times threw a critical light of another color on play reviewing. Roy Erickson writing from Cambridge, Mass., suggests even the author might be deceived by stamping, whistling and "Bravo" since for every loud enthusiast in the theatre, there might be fifty polite and quiet people who clap mechanically; then leave.

Mr. Erickson was provoked by the author and audience reaction to a Boston production. He assured himself that most of the people connected with the play were intelligent but he felt compelled to conclude that (a) you can't possibly tell a bad play from the reading, and (b) the more involved in it you become the less you can tell.

MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME

The Midwest Conference put up the welcome sign and made it wide and high. The results were handsome! By states let us introduce you to our new Conference members.

IOWA: Sister M. Corona, St. John's School, Bancroft; Sister M. Lucy, Visitation High School, Dubuque; Charles V. Preisinger, Trinity College, Sioux City; and the Marquette Players and Uptown Players of Dubuque.

WISCONSIN: Sister M. Veronica, OSF, Milwaukee; Dorothy Kanitz, Milwaukee.

ILLINOIS: Ursuline Academy, Springfield; Columbian Literary Society, St. Joseph's College, Collegeville; Mundelein College, Chicago. Individual memberships were received from Sister M. Eugene, SSND, Le Clerc College, Belleville; Catharine E. Connors, Loyola Community Theatre, Chicago; Florian Heredes, O.S.B., St. Procopius College, Lisle; and Anna May Hawkotta and Therese Marie Cuny of Chicago.

From neighboring states we have Sister M. Charitas, Academy of Holy Angels, Minneapolis, Minnesota; Margaret Passmore, Detroit, Michigan; St. John's CYO Drama Club, Whiting, Indiana; and the Mount Players of the College of Mt. St. Joseph on-the-Ohio, Mt. St. Joseph, Ohio.

New England is also with us again for Sister Bernadette Marie, St. Joseph's Convent, New Bedford, Massachusetts, requested membership this month.

Mr. Fred J. Karen, director of the Louisville, Ky., Catholic Theatre Guild modestly wrote, "Our recent production of 'Ecce Agnus Dei' was the most successful we have ever given." If we quote Louisville's newspaper reviews, you will better understand Mr. Karen's word "successful."

"Briefly," remarked one reviewer, "I liked the play so much I'd like to see it again tonight. And then about once a month for a long, long time." Another lauded Mr. Karen saying, "Ho, it is, who is responsible for the splendid staging the truly beautiful lighting, the magnificent stage pictures."

Fred Karen wrote "Ecce Agnus Dei" and directed the Guild in its production. The theme has a "wallop;" it strikes at tyranny, persecution, enslavement, and debasement. It is a passion play with a potent lesson in democracy.

NOTES FROM BROADWAY

This should be titled "Jo Mielziner Scores Again," for the vice-president of the Conference has added the sets of the Ballet Theatre's "Pillar of Fire" to his stage successes. Now he is at work on six scenes for "The Warrior's Husband," which will open in Boston and reach New York about May 26.

Arthur Hopkins at a luncheon for the William A. Bradys sized up the modern stage and not too flatteringly. "We are constantly reminded that the theatre is dead," he said, "and the unfortunate proof is that much of our modern theatre never lived. But the theatre will assert its eternal life when life is brought to it. Even dynamite needs a spark." Hopkins deplored the lack of genuine comedians and affirmed that the honest artist asks nothing more than attention.

Bill Brady himself, now 79, challenged John Anderson, the drama critic to establish a play-readers guild within the Critics Circle and advise managers what to produce and what to avoid.

"Spring Again" which co-stars Grace George and C. Aubrey Smith will receive The Theatre Club's prize medal as the outstanding play of the year.

So you think you're busy! Sister Charitas, C.S.J., Academy of the Holy Angels, Minneapolis, exploded all our theories on heavy production schedules.

After successfully competing in the recent Midwest Catholic Play Festival in Des Moines (her group's production of "White Queen, Red Queen" was rated "Excellent," and two of the cast received medal awards for acting), she staged "Ask For The Moon" --- a pre-publication test comedy --- on April 12.

On April 18 the Junior Dramatic Class presented "Little Women," and "Don't Take My Penny" is in rehearsal for May production. In addition they are participating in the play-picture contest sponsored by the Dramatic Publishing Company.

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We would like to call Conference members attention to "Little Women." This play, published in 1941 by the Dramatic Publishing Company has a nine girl cast.

DRAMA FOR DEFENSE

We have already encouraged you to take your productions into Army camps or Servicemen's recreation centers, but St. John's C.Y.O. Drama Club of Whiting, Indiana, has just warmed us up to a new idea.

For many of you transporting your play is impossible. Produce your play as usual --- and when the enthusiastic reviews are in your local newspapers, announce you will do it again --- but the proceeds of the second run can be contributed to the funds that will make it possible for us to win the war.

And, of course, if you wish, all proceeds from all performances can be turned into war materials!

A one man part in the defense scheme is exemplified by Dick Breen, co-author of the Fordham play, "Who Ride On White Horses." Dick was with the Navy Department as a writer of speeches, and now, still in the Navy neighborhood, he has been assigned to write one act plays.

These plays are produced in the shipyards of the Eastern States to up the morale, not only of men in the armed services, but also of those who are engaged in defense work.

The Berkeley Playmakers are offering two hundred dollars worth of Defense Bonds to successful competitors in their eighteenth annual national competition in one act playwriting. A special bonus will be given to the author of the best comedy submitted. The terms of the contest, which closes on June 30, 1942, can be obtained by writing to the Plays Committee, The Berkeley Playmakers, 1814 Blake Street, Berkeley, California.

This year the contest is especially designed to encourage the writing of plays for production at naval and military centers under the auspices of the Red Cross and similar organizations.

One of the judges will be the playwright, William Saroyan.

BROADWAY SALUTES "SAVONAROLA"

Metropolitan drama critics continue to applaud the efforts of the Blackfriars' Guild, which on April 23 opened Father Urban Nagle's "Savonarola" for a ten day run, and musical comedy fed New Yorkers now look to Guild productions for substantial thoughts. It is anticipated that the small theatre will become the most reliable of proving grounds for worthwhile plays.

The story of Savonarola, the eloquent Dominican who by his sermons effected a marvelous change in the morality of 15th century Florence, is drama enough for anyone.

Present world conditions emphasize the play's importance for as Father Nagle explains, "The justification for bringing this fire-brand to the attention of the theatregoer is not to embarrass the apologists but rather because the problems he faced in civil reform are with us all over again."

The entire cast of twenty-two men gave excellent performances, and special congratulations were in order for the striking set against which the drama was enacted.

"Savonarola" concludes the first season for the New York Chapter of the Blackfriars Guild, and the city wide attention which has been provoked by the Guild's play series leaves no doubt as to the success of this experimental theatre group.

MAY PRODUCTION SCHEDULE

CONVENT STATION, N. J. --- The Dramatic Association of St. Elizabeth's College will produce Thornton Wilder's "Our Town" on May 1 and 2. Male roles will be taken by students from St. Peter's College.

WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS --- The Dramatic Societies of Boston College and Holy Cross are presenting Shakespearean Scenes on May 3.

FLUSHING, NEW YORK --- Late in May The St. Michael's Players will give their first play for a general audience. It will be the three act comedy, "You Can't Beat the Irish." All production details are being handled by the group whose top age is twenty-three.

A SOUND IDEA

The Dramatists Play Service has just advised us that it has a new vitamin for your play diet. "Nearly every play requires what are generally known as sound effects," they remind us, and by arrangements with a recording company they are prepared to give you anything from a baby crying to an explosion in an ammunition factory.

Records identical with those used for Broadway productions can be secured..... advice will be given on what records may be used for specific required effects... practically all records cost two dollars each.

Additional information can be obtained by writing the Dramatists Play Service, Inc., 6 East 39th Street, New York City, New York.

THE AMERICAN THEATRE EARNS ITS WINGS

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committee will also attempt to supply you with a guest speaker from the ranks of the theatre.

The amount of money raised has no bearing on the importance of the group raising it. The really important thing is that the campaign is going to use a few dollars from a small group as appreciatively and for the same services as the \$100 and \$500 from the more fortunately situated larger groups.

APRIL OPENINGS

MILWAUKEE, WISCONSIN --- "Ramona" by Helen Hunt Jackson was the spring production of St. Mary's Academy. It is interesting to note that there was a different cast for each of the two performances given, and six of the actors played dual roles.

PEORIA, ILLINOIS --- The Catholic Theatre Guild presented "Kind Lady" by Edward Chodorov on April 27 and 28.

WORCESTER, MASSACHUSETTS --- The Playshop Members of Holy Cross College presented four original one act plays on April 19. The college's Dramatic Society also conducted a Civic Drama Tournament of one act plays on April 25, at the State Teachers' College Theatre.

RICHMOND: CONVENTION CITY

"Some day the missions of the Southland will vibrate with the strength of a strongly imbedded Catholicism" and The Catholic Committee of the South means that day to be soon.

The Committee met for its third annual convention in Richmond on the 26, 27, and 28 of April. It hopes to unify more than 600,000 Catholics scattered over our southeastern states and to meet and treat the problems of the South.

If the scheduled convention of the Catholic Theatre Conference is realized in Richmond, we shall be happy to vie with C.C.S. in planning as expert a program, of which a leadership clinic, discussion groups, and well chosen speakers were an integral part.

Headed by Rachel Crothers, the Theatre Wing has among its directors and active workers such men and women as John Golden, Helen Hayes, Bert Lytell, Gertrude Lawrence, Jane Cowl, and Arthur Richman.

At a New York meeting held a few days after Pearl Harbor, leaders in every branch of theatre activity, --- actors, playwrights, producers, directors, press agents, students, --- pledged their support to the effort.

